

Sermon: Pentecost 11

The Rev. Mike Wernick

August 20, 2017

Year A

Genesis 45:1-15

Psalm 133

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15:10-28

Joseph dreamed dreams... like we all do... though some of us remember our dreams... and some of us do not... some of us dream in black and white... and some of us dream in color... some of us... while we're dreaming... know we're asleep... and some of us think dreams are real life... and like Joseph... some of us have some sense of what our dreams mean... does God speak to us in dreams... yes... absolutely... though most modern people have mostly lost sight of that... too many of us believe that dreams come... for example... from that piece of undigested fish...

But Joseph dreamed dreams... his second dream in Genesis 37:9... similar to the first... was that the sun... the moon... and eleven stars were bowing down to him... but when he told his father and his eleven brothers... his father rebuked him and said... *What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we come... I and your mother and your brothers... and bow to the ground before you?*... so his brothers were jealous of him... and they later planned to kill him... but at Rueben's suggestion... the brothers sold him to some Ishmaelites... who sold him to some Midianites... who sold him to Potiphar... the captain of Pharaoh's guard...

And through a series of events... Joseph earned a reputation for dream analysis... and the Pharaoh called on him... and he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams... seven years of plenty... and seven years of famine... so impressed was Pharaoh... that he set Joseph over his whole house... all of Egypt... and said that only with regard to the throne... would he remain higher...

So when the famine came... only Egypt had grain... and all the world came to Joseph... to buy it... his brothers as well... the story is too long to re-tell here... I've said too much

already... but Joseph had good reason to be furious with his brothers... he had good reason to do to them... what they had done to him... or worse... but God sent him before them... to preserve life... and their eyes... and the eyes of Joseph's brother Benjamin saw... that it was his own mouth which spoke to them... and he spoke of love and reconciliation...

Joel and I went to a service of reconciliation Monday evening... it was the one I sent an email about... it was a little bit like getting out of the boat... and walking on water... about fifteen feet away... there were strong winds of praise music... and waves of Hallelujahs... I wondered if I would sink... but we went because churches in the Grand Rapids area... were asked to come... after the events in Charlottesville... and be reconciled... and ask God to heal us from the sin of racism...

On Saturday... the Former Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan... said... *this rally represents a turning point for the people of this country.... we are determined to take our country back... we're going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump... that's why we voted for him... because he said he's going to take our country back... and that's what we gotta do...* others openly chanted... *Jews will not replace us...* and the rally's co-organizer said they wanted someone even more racist than President Trump... they wanted someone who would not give his daughter away to a Jew...

In response... Brother Christopher Markert... Minister General of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans... wrote... "Trump is shamefully wrong for saying there are 'very fine people' on both sides. Neo-Nazism is not just a 'difference of opinion' - it's an ideology that believes certain races and ethnicities need to be wiped from the earth. White nationalism isn't just 'pride' in one's 'culture.' It's wanting to have white supremacy continue to be the norm for this nation. And this isn't a right vs. left, liberal vs. conservative, Republican vs. Democrat situation. It's confronting evil that has decided it's safe to come out in very public and blatant ways."

Ancient people didn't understand celestial mechanics the way we do... they thought that a solar eclipse... meant that the gods were angry... that they were withdrawing their light and their love... they saw them as foreboding omens of bad things to come... we understand this much better now... programs on our smartphones can now calculate the percentage and duration of the totality of this darkness... tomorrow the moon will cover the sun... and it will get dark... the longest duration of totality will be 2 minutes and 41.6 seconds... but there's another kind of darkness which lasts longer... is more difficult to calculate... so we don't know how long it will last... it's the darkness of the human heart...

The Southern Poverty Law Center tracks hate groups around the country... they are defined as those which have beliefs or practices which attack or malign an entire class of people... typically for their immutable characteristics... hate group activities can include criminal acts... marches... rallies... speeches... meetings... leafleting... or publishing... the Law Center's lists are compiled using hate group publications and websites, citizen and law enforcement reports, field sources and news reports... Michigan's hate groups are...

White Boy Society - White Nationalist
Statewide

Secure Michigan - Anti-Muslim
New Baltimore

Loyal White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Trenton

NS Publications - Neo-Nazi
Wyandotte

All Eyes on Egypt Bookstore - Black Separatist
Detroit

National Socialist Movement - Neo-Nazi
Detroit

Northern Hammerskins - Racist Skinhead
Detroit

NSM88 Records - Hate Music Record Label
Detroit

Black Riders Liberation Party - Black Separatist
Detroit

Israel United In Christ - Black Separatist
Detroit

ACT for America - Anti-Muslim
Detroit

Israelite School of Universal Practical Knowledge - Black Separatist
Detroit

Nation of Islam - Black Separatist
Detroit

White Rabbit Radio - White Nationalist
Dearborn Heights

Foundation for the Marketplace of Ideas - White Nationalist
Clinton Township

American Nazi Party
Westland

Great Lakes Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Alpena

Militant Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Alpena

Yahweh's Truth - Christian Identity
Linwood

Social Contract Press - White Nationalist
Petoskey

Traverse City Family Group - Anti-LGBT

American Freedom Law Center - Anti Muslim
Ann Arbor

Deir Yassin Remembered - Holocaust Denial
Ann Arbor

Ku Klos Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Battle Creek

Nation of Islam - Black Separatist
Benton Harbor

Nation of Islam - Black Separatist
Grand Rapids

ACT for America - Anti-Muslim
Grand Rapids

Gallows Tree Wotansvolk Alliance - Neo-Nazi
Grand Rapids

There's twenty-eight... in case you didn't count...

Bp. Houghland wrote this week that racism... in any form... along with the tenets of white supremacy... white nationalism... Nazism or other similar ideologies of hate and divisiveness... cannot be reconciled with Jesus' teachings or the Christian faith.... he said you cannot proclaim these ideologies and claim to be a Christian...

Bp. Satterlee... because he's legally blind... doesn't write too much... but posts videos... I'm going to play a part of the video he posted six days ago... [up to 5:40]...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5v7eKmXjSU>

When we follow tomorrow's eclipse... we follow an event... which includes a few minutes of darkness... when we follow the One who created the heavens and the Earth... who loves all of creation... and loves all people... we are transformed...

But we need to get out of our boats... we need to take some risks... we need to become light bearers... and contend with eclipsed hearts... I'm not exactly sure what all that will look like... but we need more doing... more social justice involvement... and less talking... and a lot less FaceBook posting... we need to pray... and maybe we will even wake up enough... to dream God's dreams again... which are sent... so that our mouths may speak words of life... not words which take life away...

Mike+